

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 AID-05 IO-13 MCT-02 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04

SIL-01 /106 W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1862

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BL, SHUM

SUBJECT: DETENTIONS IN THE WAKE OF THE BOLIVIAN COUP D' ETAT

REF: STATE 188367

1. SUMMARY: IN FIRST FEW DAYS FOLLOWING JULY 21 COUP D' ETAT, GOB ARRESTED A NUMBER OF POLITICIANS, LABOR LEADERS, ETC. HOWEVER, GOB HAS NOW ANNOUNED THAT ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS WILL BE IMMEDIATELY RELEASED. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS THAT ANY INDIVIDUALS DETAINED BY THE GOB WERE MALTREATED IN ANY WAY. END SUMMARY.

2. REPORTS DEPARTMENT HAS RECEIVED FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS AND FROM WOLA THAT APPROXIMATELY 130 INDIVIDUALS, MOSTLY UNIVERSITY, POLITICAL OR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS, WERE DETAINED IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS FOLLOWING THE JULY 21 COUP D' ETAT APPEAR TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY ACCURATE.

3. HOWEVER, INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE GOB IS NOW RELEASING MOST OR ALL OF THEE PERSONS DETAINED. INTERIOR MINISTER RICO TORO, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, MET WITH JUAN LECHIN (WHO HAS NOW EMERGED FROM HIDING)

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AND OTHER LABOR LEADERS JULY 26 AND CHARACTERIZED THE INCIDENTS THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN VARIOUS CITIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AS "EXCESSES OF AUTHORITY". RICO TORO PROMISED THAT EFFECTIVE JULY 27 THERE WOULD NOT BE ANY MORE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA. THE EMBASSY HAS ALSO LEARNED FROM OTHER INFORMED SOURCES THAT THE GOB

IS DISPOSED TO RELEASE MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THE PRISONERS.

4. EMBOFF SPOKE JULY 27 WITH FATHER JULIO TUMIRI, PRESIDENT OF THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. TUMIRI WAS MOST CONCERNED WITH THE SITUATION, PARTICULARLY WITH THE VERBAL AND PHYSICAL ATTACKS ON MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ASSEMBLY. HOWEVER, TUMIRI AGREED THAT THE NEXT FEW DAYS WOULD DETERMINE WHETHER THE GOB INTENDED TO LIVE UP TO ITS PROMISE TO RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW IN DETENTION. TUMIRI ADDED THAT HE HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY REPORTS THAT ANYONE IN GOVERNMENT CUSTODY HAD BEEN BEATEN OR OTHERWISE MALTREATED.

5. BELOW IS A LIST OF THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENTS OF PRESS REPORTED ARRESTS: A) IN SUCRE A BOLIVIAN JOURNALIST, WHO NORMALLY RESIDES IN QUITO, WAS RELEASED FROM CUSTODY ON CONDITION THAT HE LEAVE THE COUNTRY. TWO OTHER INDIVIDUALS, ONE A WORKER AND THE OTHER A "LEADER" OF THE MNRI, WERE RELEASED FROM CUSTODY ON CONDITION THAT THEY TAKE UP RESIDENCE IN LA PAZ AND COCHABAMBA RESPECTIVELY. B) IN POTOSI TWO MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ASSEMBLY WERE ARRESTED AND, ACCORDING TO TUMIRI, THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY FROM THAT DEPARTMENT, A FRANCISCAN PRIEST, HAS GONE INTO HIDING AFTER BEING ATTACKED BY THE PREFECT FOR ALLEGEDLY HAVING TIES WITH SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS. C) IN TARIJA SIX PEOPLE, INCLUDING A LEADER OF THE URBAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF THAT DEPARTMENT AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AN EX-RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY, WERE ARRESTED. ALL SIX HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN RELEASED, ALL UNHARMED. D) IN COCHABAMBA, ACCORDING TO THE OFFICE OF THE PREFECT, ALL PERSONS ARRESTED, INCLUDING UNIVERSITY, LABOR AND HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICIALS, HAVE BEEN RELEASED.

6. IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE CITED INCIDENTS THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF OTHER INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE THAT HAVE NOT INVOLVED GOB OFFICIALS. IN THE MINING CENTER OF CATAVI-SIGLO AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF WORKERS WERE ATTACKED BY "PARA-MILITARY" UNITS, SOME MEMBERS OF WHOM ALLEGEDLY WORK AT COMIBOL. SOME OF THE WORKERS WERE HOSPITALIZED. IN ORURO THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS, FATHER TUFFY, AND ONE OTHER CLERIC WERE BEATEN ON JULY 22 BY MEMBERS OF THE FALANGE POLITICAL PARTY. AND IN LA PAZ AND ORURO THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE URBAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION WERE OCCUPIED BY "NATIONALIST" GROUPS. THE LA PAZ HEADQUARTERS HAS SINCE BEEN REOCCUPIED BY THE LEGITIMATE UNION LEADERSHIP AND THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION HAS PROMISED TO RESOLVE THE ORURO PROBLEM SHORTLY.

7. COMMENT: THE SERIES OF ARRESTS OF POLITICAL AND LABOR LEADERS AND OF MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ASSEMBLY IN THE

FIRST FEW DAYS FOLLOWING THE COUP WAS APPARENTLY PRECAUTIONARY ACTION ON THE PART OF THE PEREDA ADMINISTRATION, AND POSSIBLY BY SOME LOCAL OFFICIALS ACTING ON THEIR OWN, TO TRY TO PREVENT AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT REACTION. IT NOW APPEARS THAT EITHER THE PEREDA ADMINISTRATION FEELS ITSELF SECURE ENOUGH, AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT, TO PROMISE TO RELEASE ALL THOSE DETAINED OR IT IS CONCERNED ABOUT INTERNATIONAL REACTION. THE EMBASSY WILL BE WATCHING CAREFULLY OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS TO SEE WHETHER THE GOB CARRIES OUT ITS PROMISE TO RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS. GIVEN THE CONTINUING UNCERTAINTY AND TENSENESS THAT EXISTS IN THE COUNTRY, HOWEVER, IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT, WHILE THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DETAINEES WILL DROP SIGNIFICANTLY OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, OTHER INDIVIDUALS MAY BE PICKED UP FOR QUESTIONING AND DETAINED FOR SHORT PERIODS.

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Message Attributes

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